The species *Senega* has *erect, smooth, simple stems, with alternate, lanceolate leaves, broadest at base. Flowers slightly crested.*

Class *Diadelphia*, order *Octandria;* natural orders *Lomentaceæ*, Linn. *Pediculares*, Juss.

The Polygala senega has a firm, hard, branching perennial root, consisting of a moderately solid wood, and a thick bark. This root sends up a number of annual stems, which are simple, smooth, occasionally tinged with red. The leaves are scattered, nearly or quite sessile, lanceolate, with a subacute point, smooth, paler underneath. Flowers white, in a close terminal spike. The calyx, which in this genus is the most conspicuous part of the flower, consists of five leafets, the two largest of which, or wings, are roundish-ovate, white, and slightly veined. Corolla small, closed, having two obtuse lateral segments, and a short crested extremity. Capsules obcordate, invested by the persistent calyx, compressed, two celled, two valved. Seeds two oblong-obovate, acute at one end, slightly hairy, curved, blackish, with a longitudinal, bifid, white appendage on the concave side. The spike opens gradually, so that the lower flowers are in fruit while the upper ones are in blossom.

The rose coloured variety of this plant, as it has been considered by Michaux, proves to be a distinct species. Some species which I possess from Carolina have branching, pubescent stems, and very long, loose spikes. The flowers are several times larger than those of P. senega.

The root of the Polygala senega has an unpleasant and somewhat acid taste. After chewing, it leaves a sensation of acrimony in the mouth, and still more in the fauces, if it has been swallowed. These properties it communicates fully to water upon boiling. The process of decoction does not appear to dissipate any of its power, since the distilled water is destitute of the taste and smell of the plant. Alcohol dissolves a substance, apparently of the resinous kind, giving a precipitate when water is added. Iron produces little change in solutions of this root, and gelatin occasions no alteration whatever.

Medicinally administered, the Seneca snake root is sudorific and expectorant in small doses, and emetic and cathartic in large ones. Its most usual mode of exhibition is in decoction, which may be made of suitable strength by boiling an ounce of the root in a pint and an half of water, till it is reduced to a pint. This preparation may

JACOB BIGELOW *American Medical Botany* BOSTON, 1817-1820 CARY GRAPHIC ARTS COLLECTION, ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY Octavo